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ABSTRACT

CAFETERIA-type rating systems, modeled after the one developed at Purdue University, allow the instructors being evaluated to select those items which their students will use in evaluating the instructors. Such computer-assisted systems allow the instructor to tailor the evaluation to the particular instructional strategies used. This study investigated the influence of teacher characteristics and rating received on item selection. A total of 533 instructors--rated both high and low by their students--were classified according to subject discipline (agriculture, commerce, education, social sciences, physical sciences, humanities, and fine arts); and faculty rank/teaching experience. The item content (whether it referred to student, teacher, or course characteristics) was also examined. It was concluded that faculty, in general, selected items in a similar pattern, regardless of their academic rank or departmental discipline. Items pertaining to course management were most frequently selected, perhaps because teachers felt they were most likely to be able to improve in that area. The suggestion that teachers select items which will help them to receive a higher rating was not supported, since there were no statistically significant differences in item selection between high and low-rated faculty. (GDC)

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Selection of Course Evaluation Items by High and Low Rated Faculty

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The use of CAFETERIA-type student rating systems is fairly recent and expanding. To date, little is known about the item selections made by users of such systems. The intent of the study was to examine the item selections of instructors classified by academic rank, discipline area, and student rating results (high and low rated faculty). In general, results would indicate that item choices bear little relationship to teaching experience, course content, or rating results.

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the

National Council on Measurement in Education

San Francisco, CA

April, 1979

Selection of Course Evaluation Items

by High and Low Rated Faculty

Objectives of the Inquiry

The first computer-assisted CAFETERIA system (Derry, J. C., Seibert, W. F., Starry, A. R., Van Horn, J. W. and Wright, G. G., 1974) for building tailor-made student rating instruments for college instructors became available at Purdue in 1974. Since that time several other CAFETERIA-like systems have been developed and utilized (Custom Questionnaires, University of Minnesota; Instructor and Course Evaluation System, University of Illinois; Instructor Designed Questionnaires, University of Michigan; Student Perceptions of Teaching, University of Iowa). This rapid acceptance and growth of CAFETERIA-type systems is due, in part, to their flexibility and their ability to accommodate differences in instructional strategies. Through the use of such student rating systems faculty can select their own evaluative questions and thus tailor evaluation to their individual needs.

Despite the increasing popularity and use of computer-assisted student rating systems little is known about the item selection process used by the instructor. Questions like the following have yet to be answered:

From which instructional areas (e.g., course management, instructor personality characteristics) do instructors select the highest percentage of questionnaire items?

Do instructors with differing academic ranks make differing item selections?

Do instructors rated highly on overall teaching ability by students select different items than do poorly rated instructors?

This study attempts to answer these questions by examining the item selection of instructors who used a CAFETERIA-type student rating system.

Instrumentation

The item selection process of a CAFETERIA-type student rating system was examined through faculty use of the Instructor and Course Evaluation System (ICES) developed in the Office of Instructional Resources at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (1977). In this student rating system, campus faculty have three basic options for selection of items or questionnaires.

Option 1. A department, school, or institute may devise a set of common items (departmental core) comprised of generally 5 to 15 items. All faculty from an academic unit with a core have the core automatically printed with their order. Under Option 1 the instructor can select additional items from the ICES Item Catalog, (the catalog presently contains about 450 items) as space permits.

Option 2. The instructor may construct a complete, individualized questionnaire by selecting up to 23 items from the ICES Item Catalog.

Option 3. The instructor may select a pre-designed questionnaire, e.g., the Illinois Course Evaluation Questionnaire (CEQ), pure lecture or pure discussion questionnaires (10 such questionnaires are available).

To investigate the instructor selection of questionnaire items, only items chosen under Option 1 and Option 2 (additional instructor-selected items) were analyzed in the study.

Each questionnaire has three generally-stated standard items preprinted on each questionnaire blank (a campus wide core). Normative data are provided for campus wide and departmental core items so that comparative decisions can be made. Norms are not provided for instructor selected items due to the inappropriateness of comparative information for diagnostic feedback purposes.

The ICES Item Catalog utilizes a two-dimensional classification scheme--item content (construct) and item specificity. Items were classified as a general or specific concept under one of the following content headings:

I. Course Management

A. Organization/Structure

B. Instructional Assignment and Materials

C. Grading and Exams

D. Workload

II. Student Outcomes of Instruction

A. Cognitive

B. Affective

C. Participation and Effort

III. Instructor Characteristics and Style

A. Communication Skills

B. Stimulation of Thinking

C. Warmth and Concern for Students

IV. Instructional Environment

A. Social Climate

B. Physical Setting

V. Student Preferences for Instruction/Learning Style

VI. Specific Instructional Settings (Including Laboratory, Studio Art, PLATO, Team Teaching, Clinical and Field Trips)

Methodology

Instructor Classification

The sample for this investigation consisted of high and low rated faculty using instructor-selected items in the fall, 1977 and spring, 1978 semesters. The total number of faculty was 308 for fall and 225 for spring. High and low rated faculty were selected according to their class mean response on the standard, preprinted 6-choice item:

Rate the Instructor Excellent----------Very Poor

Faculty obtaining a mean response in the upper 30% of their particular reference group (Faculty teaching a required course, Faculty teaching a mixed required/elective course or Faculty teaching an elective course) were classified as high rated, while faculty obtaining a mean in the lower 30% of their reference group were classified as low rated. In this manner, item selections were examined for high and low rated Instructors, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors.

Faculty were also classified into one of the following seven major disciplines:

Agriculture (Agronomy, Horticulture, Dairy Science)

Commerce (Business Administration, Finance, Economics)

Education (Educational Psychology, Physical Education, Special Education)

Social Sciences (Psychology, Sociology, Social Work)

Physical Sciences (Mathematics, Geology, Physics)

Humanities (History, English, Foreign Languages)

Fine Arts (Music, Theatre, Art)

Item Classification

Instructor selected items were classified by the major content headings of the ICES Catalog and by the "reference" of each item. Item reference relates to the context of an item as feedback regarding Student, Instructor or Course characteristics or outcomes. For example:

Item Reference	Item	
Student	I become irritated with the same students monopolizing class discussions.	
	Very often	Almost never
Instructor	The instructor thoroughly answered students' questions.	
	Almost always	Almost never
Course	The homework was:	
	Excessively difficult	Extremely easy

In total there were 233 (43.2%) Course reference items, 221 (40.9%) Instructor reference items and 86 (15.9%) Student reference items.

Data Analysis

Instructor selections of ICES catalog items for fall and spring semesters were used to construct item selection frequency distributions. Frequency distributions categorizing the items (a) according to the six catalog content headings and (b) according to the three item references were constructed separately for high and low rated faculty and for faculty of each academic rank. Chi square statistics were used to determine if there were statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences in item selection percentages:

(1) across ICES catalog headings and reference categories;

(2) across ICES catalog headings and reference categories for high vs. low rated faculty; and

(3) across ICES catalog headings and reference categories for faculty of varying academic rank.

Separate chi square statistics were computed for each semester's faculty selections.

To examine item selection differences between faculty discipline areas, data from both semesters were combined and academic ranks collapsed to provide a larger data base. By grouping faculty item selections by discipline area, separate frequency distributions were constructed; one categorizing items by ICES catalog headings and the other grouping items by their reference category. Separate chi square statistics were calculated to determine if there were statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) in the faculty selection (separated by discipline area) of items classified by content and reference categories.

Results

Faculty Selection of Items Classified by Content and Reference Categories

Faculty selections of items classified by ICES catalog content headings for each semester are presented in Table 1. In both semesters faculty identically rank ordered the content headings through their item selections. The chi square statistics computed on the item selection percentages within each of the six content headings revealed statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences among headings. The χ^2 values for fall and spring semesters were 67.95 ($\chi^2_{.05} = 11.07$, df = 5) and 75.19 respectively. The most selected content heading was Course Management followed in order by Instructor Characteristics, Student Outcomes, Specific Instructional Settings, Instructional Environment and Student Preference for Instruction.

The faculty selections of items classified by the three reference categories are presented for each semester in Table 2. Again in both semesters faculty selected items in a similar fashion. The chi square statistics computed on item percentages across the three reference categories were statistically significant ($p < .05$). The χ^2 values for fall and spring semesters were 27.64 ($\chi^2_{.05} = 5.99$, df = 2) and 37.91 respectively. Faculty selected the highest percentage of items from the Course reference category followed in order by Instructor and Student reference categories.

Item Selection by Academic Rank

In the fall 34 Instructors, 136 Assistant Professors, 91 Associate Professors and 47 Professors used instructor selected items while in the spring 27 Instructors, 98 Assistant Professors, 54 Associate Professors and 46 Professors used such items. Faculty selections of items classified by catalog content headings for each semester are presented in Table 3. The item selection percentages within each of the six content headings varied slightly across academic ranks. The chi square statistic computed on item percentages of all six content headings revealed no statistically significant ($p > .05$) difference between the four academic ranks. The χ^2 values

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Faculty *

Item Selections Classified by ICES Catalog Headings

Semester:	Fall		Spring	
	f	%	f	%
Catalog Headings				
I. Course Management				
A. Organization/Structure	812	13.9	640	15.6
B. Instructional Assignments and Materials	552	9.4	381	9.3
C. Grading and Exams	519	8.9	343	8.4
D. Workload	350	6.0	293	7.1
	2233	38.2	1657	40.4
II. Student Outcomes of Instruction				
A. Cognitive	661	11.3	555	13.5
B. Affective	306	5.2	220	5.4
C. Participation and Effort	247	4.2	172	4.2
	1214	20.8	947	23.1
III. Instructor Characteristics and Style				
A. Communication Skills	1053	18.0	667	16.3
B. Stimulation of Thinking	247	4.2	165	4.0
C. Warmth and Concern	415	7.1	266	6.5
	1715	29.3	1098	26.8
IV. Instructional Environment				
A. Social-Climate	259	4.4	145	3.5
B. Physical Setting	33	.6	20	.5
	292	5.0	165	4.0
V. Student Preferences for Instructor/Learning Style	95	1.6	63	1.5
VI. Specific Instructional Settings	308	5.3	172	4.2
TOTAL	5857	100.2	4102	100

*Both high and low rated combined.

Table 2

Frequency Distributions of Faculty*

Item Selections Classified by Item Reference

Semester:	Fall		Spring	
	f	%	f	%
Item Reference				
Course	2962	50.6	2344	57.2
Instructor	2350	40.1	1466	35.7
Student	545	9.3	292	7.1
TOTAL	5757	100	4102	100

*Both high and low rated combined.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of Faculty Item Selections Classified by ICES Catalog Content Headings

Academic Rank:	Instructor				Assistant Professor				Associate Professor				Professor			
	Fall		Spring		Fall		Spring		Fall		Spring		Fall		Spring	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Catalog Headings																
I. Course Management																
A. Organization/Structure	77	11.8	70	13.5	383	14.2	287	15.3	236	14.0	146	16.1	116	14.1	137	17.2
B. Instructional Assignments and Materials	48	7.3	52	10.0	238	8.8	174	9.3	169	10.1	79	8.6	97	11.8	76	9.5
C. Grading & Exams	59	9.0	43	8.3	240	8.8	153	8.2	151	9.0	69	7.5	69	8.4	78	9.8
D. Workload	39	6.0	43	8.3	154	5.7	127	6.8	101	6.0	69	7.5	56	6.8	54	6.8
	233	34.1	208	40.1	1015	37.5	741	39.6	657	39.1	363	39.7	338	41.1	345	43.3
II. Student Outcomes of Instruction																
A. Cognitive	52	7.9	66	12.7	326	12.1	278	14.8	195	11.6	111	1.2	88	10.7	100	12.5
B. Affective	42	6.4	32	6.2	126	4.7	86	4.6	97	5.8	62	6.8	41	5.0	40	5.0
C. Participation & Effort	23	3.5	25	4.8	130	4.8	76	4.1	60	3.6	37	4.0	34	4.2	34	4.3
	117	17.8	123	23.7	582	21.6	440	23.5	352	21.0	210	23.0	163	19.9	174	21.8
III. Instructor Characteristics and Style																
A. Communication Skills	133	20.3	81	15.6	491	18.2	327	17.5	289	17.2	145	15.9	140	17.1	114	14.3
B. Stimulation of Thinking	27	4.1	30	5.8	120	4.4	73	3.9	67	4.0	34	3.7	33	4.0	28	3.5
C. Warmth and Concern for Students	63	9.6	55	10.6	175	6.5	108	5.8	135	8.1	79	8.6	42	5.1	24	3.0
	223	34.0	166	32.0	786	29.1	508	27.2	491	29.3	258	28.2	215	26.2	166	20.8
IV. Instructional Environment																
A. Social Climate	35	5.3	14	2.7	124	4.6	64	3.4	67	4.0	43	4.7	33	4.0	24	3.0
B. Physical Setting	1	.2	2	.4	22	.8	11	.6	7	.4	0	0	3	.4	7	.9
	36	5.5	16	3.1	146	5.4	75	4.0	74	4.4	43	4.7	36	4.4	31	3.9
V. Student Preferences for Instruction/Learning Style	7	1.1	1	.2	50	1.9	25	1.3	20	1.2	43	1.3	18	2.2	25	3.1
VI. Specific Instructional Settings	49	7.5	5	.9	124	4.5	82	4.4	84	5.0	28	3.1	51	6.2	57	7.1
TOTAL	655	100	519	100	2703	100	1871	1001	1678	100	914	100	821	100	798	100

for the fall and spring semesters were 3.85 ($\chi^2_{.05}$ = 25, df = 15) and 10.73, respectively. Results indicated that faculty of all academic ranks selected items classified by catalog content headings in similar fashion, thus demonstrating an identical rank ordering of content headings and almost identical item selection percentages within each heading.

The frequency distribution of faculty item selections classified by item reference is presented in Table 4. Faculty selection of items classified by item reference did not differ across academic ranks as indicated by the result of the chi square statistic computed on item percentages grouped by reference category and academic rank. The χ^2 values for the fall and spring semesters were 1.75 ($\chi^2_{.05}$ = 12.59, df = 6) and 3.16, respectively. Faculty of all academic ranks seemed most interested in acquiring information about the Course, slightly less interested in collecting Instructor information and least interested in obtaining Student information.

In summary, virtually no differences were observed in the item selections of faculty of varying academic ranks. Faculty of each academic rank demonstrated an identical item selection pattern across content headings and item reference categories. In both semesters the most selected content heading was Course Management followed in order by Instructor Characteristics, Student Outcomes, Specific Instructional Settings, Instructional Environment and Student Preferences for Instruction. In terms of item reference the most selected category was Course followed in order by Instructor and Student.

Item Selection by High and Low Rated Faculty

The frequency distributions of high and low rated faculty (combining all academic ranks) selections of items classified by catalog content headings are presented in Table 5. As observed through the item selections, both high and low rated faculty rank ordered the content headings the same.

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Faculty Item Selections Classified by Item Intent Reference

Academic Rank:	Instructor				Assistant Professor				Associate Professor				Professor			
Semester:	Fall		Spring		Fall		Spring		Fall		Spring		Fall		Spring	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Item Intent Reference																
Course	308	47.0	253	48.7	1424	52.7	1020	54.5	959	55.4	465	50.9	424	51.6	473	59.2
Instructor	315	48.1	217	41.9	1139	42.1	721	38.5	661	39.4	370	40.5	343	41.8	255	32.0
Student	32	4.9	49	9.4	140	5.2	130	7.0	88	5.2	79	8.6	54	6.6	70	8.8
TOTAL	655	100	519	100	2703	100	1871	100	1678	100	914	100	821	100	798	100

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of High and Low Rated Faculty

Item Selections Classified by ICES Catalog Headings

Student Rating:	HIGH RATED				LOW RATED			
Semester:	Fall		Spring		Fall		Spring	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Catalog Headings								
I. Course Management								
A. Organization/Structure	445	13.9	366	15.3	367	13.9	274	16.1
B. Instructional Assignments and Materials	266	8.3	210	8.7	286	10.8	171	10.0
C. Grading and Exams	258	8.0	171	7.1	261	9.9	172	10.1
D. Workload	191	5.9	184	7.7	159	6.0	109	6.4
	1160	36.1	931	38.8	1073	40.6	726	42.6
II. Student Outcomes of Instruction								
A. Cognitive	392	12.2	365	15.2	269	10.2	190	11.1
B. Affective	197	6.1	138	5.8	109	4.1	82	4.8
C. Participation and Effort	118	3.7	96	4.0	129	4.9	76	4.5
	707	22.0	559	25.0	507	19.2	348	20.4
III. Instructor Characteristics and Style								
A. Communication Skills	572	17.8	395	16.5	481	18.2	272	16.0
B. Stimulation of Thinking	141	4.4	106	4.4	106	4.0	59	3.5
C. Warmth and Concern	253	7.9	160	6.7	162	6.1	106	6.2
	966	30.1	661	27.6	749	28.3	437	25.7
IV. Instructional Environment								
A. Social-Climate	154	4.8	88	3.7	105	4.0	57	3.3
B. Physical Setting	16	.5	7	.3	17	.6	13	.8
	170	5.3	95	4.0	122	4.6	70	4.1
V. Student Preferences for Instructor/Learning Style	42	1.3	23	.9	53	2.0	40	2.3
VI. Specific Instructional Settings	169	5.2	89	3.7	139	5.3	83	4.9
TOTAL	3214	100	2398	100	2643	100	1704	100

The chi square statistics computed on the item selection percentages for each of the six content headings revealed no statistically significant ($p > .05$) differences between high and low rated faculty. The χ^2 values for fall and spring were .7 ($\chi^2_{.05} = 11.07$, df = 5) and 1.492, respectively. Within each semester both high and low rated faculty demonstrated identical rank ordering of content headings while selecting approximately equal percentages of items within each content heading.

The frequency distributions of high and low rated faculty selections of items classified by reference categories are presented in Table 6. The chi square statistics computed on the selection percentages of items classified by item reference revealed no statistically significant ($p > .05$) difference between high and low rated faculty. The χ^2 values for the fall and spring semesters were .42 ($\chi^2_{.05} = 5.99$, df = 3) and .6, respectively. For both semesters the high and low rated faculty selected almost identical percentages of items within and between each reference category. The order of interest for both high and low rated faculty was Course, Instructor and Student feedback items. There was no apparent interaction between the student rating (high or low) of an instructor and his/her academic rank in the selection of ICES items. In general, both high and low rated faculty of all academic ranks selected items consistent with the previously found patterns across academic ranks and across high and low rated groups.

Items Selection by Faculty Discipline Area

To examine item selection differences between faculty discipline areas data were combined from both semesters to provide a larger data base. The number of faculty members within each discipline were: 71 (Agriculture), 59 (Commerce), 73 (Education), 51 (Social Science), 64 (Physical Science), 118 (Humanities) and 87 (Fine Arts).

The frequency distribution of faculty selections of items classified by content heading and discipline area of instructor is presented in Table 7. The chi square value of 48.8 ($\chi^2_{.05} = 43.77$, df = 30) computed on the item selection percentages

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of High and Low Rated

Faculty Item Selections Classified by Item Intent Reference

Student Rating:	High Rated				Low Rated			
Semester:	Fall		Spring		Fall		Spring	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Item Intent Reference								
Course	1564	48.7	1376	57.4	1398	52.9	968	56.8
Instructor	1326	41.2	844	35.2	1024	38.7	622	36.5
Student	324	10.1	178	7.4	221	8.4	114	6.7
TOTAL	3214	100	2398	100	2743	100	1704	100

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of Item Selections Classified

by Faculty Discipline Area and ICES Catalog Content Headings

Faculty Discipline Area: / Catalog Heading:	Agriculture		Commerce		Education		Social Sciences		Physical Sciences		Humanities		Fine Arts	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I. Course Management	374	33.1	581	41.7	644	41.0	412	43.1	441	41.3	934	41.3	504	32.1
II. Student Outcomes	199	17.6	271	19.4	343	21.8	230	24.0	189	17.6	525	23.2	409	26.0
III. Instructor Characteristics and Style	286	25.2	431	30.8	469	29.9	246	25.7	304	28.4	640	28.3	432	27.5
IV. Instructional Environment	53	4.6	61	4.4	79	5.0	25	2.6	42	3.9	105	4.6	92	5.9
V. Student Preference for Instructor Learning Style	20	1.8	29	2.1	13	.8	23	2.4	14	1.3	31	1.4	28	1.8
VI. Special Instructional Settings	201	17.7	22	1.6	23	1.5	21	2.2	80	7.5	28	1.2	105	6.7
TOTAL	1133	100	1395	100	1571	100	957	100	1070	100	2263	100	1570	100

across content headings and discipline areas was statistically significant ($p < .05$). The statistical significance was primarily due to the varying use of Specific Instructional Setting items. A high percentage of Laboratory/Studio items was selected by the Agriculture, Physical Science and Fine Arts faculty. These three faculty groups also selected fewer Student Outcome items than did all other groups, with the Fine Arts faculty selecting the highest percentage of such items. This discrepancy can be partially explained through the previously mentioned increase in usage of Specific Instructional Setting items (i.e., laboratory) demonstrated by the Physical Science and Agriculture faculty.

The frequency distribution of item selections classified by item reference and discipline area of instructor is presented in Table 8. Faculty of all disciplines selected the highest percentage of Course reference items followed in rank order by Instructor and Student reference items. The percentages of items chosen within each reference category differed slightly between discipline areas. The chi square value of 5.77 ($\chi^2_{.05} = 21.03$, df = 12) computed on item selection percentages grouped by item reference and instructor discipline area was not statistically significant ($p > .05$).

Summary and Discussion

In general, faculty selected items from a CAFETERIA-like student rating system in a similar pattern, regardless of their academic rank, discipline area, or high and low ratings. From most to least selected, faculty prefered items from the ICES catalog headings in the following order: Course Management, Instructor Characteristics, Student Outcomes, Specific Instructional Settings, Instructional Environment and Student Preference for Instruction. The preference for Course Management may be partially explained by the content of the items. Most of the Course Management items relate to specific behaviors that can be easily observed and possibly changed by the instructor in order to improve the course. For example,

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Item Selections Classified

by Faculty Discipline Area and Item Intent Reference

Faculty Discipline Area:	Agriculture		Commerce		Education		Social Sciences		Physical Sciences		Humanities		Fine Arts	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Item Intent Reference														
Course	609	53.8	701	50.2	806	51.3	574	60.0	614	57.4	1194	52.7	770	49.3
Instructor	440	38.8	562	40.3	670	42.7	317	33.1	397	37.1	848	37.5	639	40.9
Student	84	7.4	132	9.5	95	6.0	74	7.7	59	5.5	221	9.8	153	9.8
TOTAL	1133	100	1395	100	1571	100	965	100	1070	100	2263	100	1562	100

it is easier to remedy one's inability to follow a course outline (Cause) than it is to alter one's sense of humor (Instructor Characteristic) or to ensure student learning (Student Outcome).

Another possible reason for the preferred use of Course Management items over either Instructor Characteristics or Student Outcome items may be that faculty as a whole believe the purpose and thus focus of their course is on student learning and not on themselves. Thus, it may not be appropriate nor socially acceptable to focus on one's own personality or actions by selecting a high percentage of Instructor Characteristic items. On the other hand, faculty need not actually select a high percentage of Student Outcome items to learn about student learning or achievement for there are other sources for such information (e.g., exams, projects, papers). When classifying items by reference, high and low rated faculty of all academic ranks and discipline areas selected reference items in the following order: Course, Instructor and Student. While it may appear that the faculty were not very interested in learning about the outcomes or achievements of their students, it could be again argued that such information can be collected elsewhere (e.g., exams, projects, papers) and need not be included on the student rating forms. Thus, the low selection percentages of Student reference items may not be caused by a lack of interest but merely by attempts to avoid redundancy.

The absence of any statistically significant difference in item selection between high and low rated faculty would suggest that there are little differences in the way that faculty select their evaluation item content, regardless of their student rating outcomes. Such a conclusion speaks indirectly to the issue of instructors using CAFETERIA-type systems to select items which will make themselves look "good." While it is impossible to conclude from this study that such selection behavior does not occur, it is important to note that similar content items are chosen by both high and low rated faculty.

Finally, item selection differed slightly for faculty members of different discipline areas. Faculty from the "hard" sciences tended to select more Specific Instructional Setting items and fewer Student Outcome items than the other disciplines while faculty from the Fine Arts and Humanities tended to select the highest number of Student Outcome items. Further research is needed to determine if a differential interest in student outcomes between the hard sciences and the humanities does in fact exist.

Educational Significance

The use of CAFETERIA-type student rating systems is fairly recent and expanding. Operations of these systems over time should assist researchers in identifying more specific characteristics of excellent and poor teaching. This study is a first attempt to document the use of such a system when initially implemented and when little formal instruction for obtaining maximum feedback has been given to faculty. In general, it can be concluded from the results that instructor item choices, grouped by major catalog headings and item reference, bear little relationship to the rank, discipline area or overall student ratings of the instructor.

Besides learning about the actual workings of a CAFETERIA rating system, results of the study also contribute further to our knowledge of "excellent and poor" teaching. Results indicated that both high and low rated faculty emphasized similar instructional areas when evaluating their courses. For example, "excellent" instructors did not seem to care more about the affective outcomes of their students than did "poor" instructors. If evaluation item content is any indication of the objects being evaluated (an assumption made by most evaluators) one may conclude that excellent and poor instructors don't actually do different things in the classroom; they merely do the same things differently.

If a major goal of a CAFETERIA rating system is to assist instructors in identifying instructional weaknesses so that improvement can occur, further research is needed to determine if faculty actually evaluate predetermined areas of weakness. Do instructors select items stressing weak over strong aspects of teaching in hopes of detecting signs of improvement? If so, is this diagnostic item selection done more by high than low rated instructors? Or, do instructors need some assistance from outside sources (e.g , colleagues, instructional resource offices) in order to select appropriate diagnostic items? Future research which longitudinally analyzes a number of individual instructors and their particular item choices is needed to address these and other research questions so that one can further learn how to maximally use (and teach others to use) the flexible and accommodating CAFETERIA rating system.

Reference Notes

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